

**USACHPPM**  
**HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE**

19 November 2004

The HIO Update provides information regarding global medical and veterinary issues of interest to the United States (US) Army. The update does not attempt to analyze the information as to its strategic or tactical impact on the US Army and should not be regarded as a medical intelligence product. Medical intelligence products are available from the [Armed Forces Medical Intelligence Center](#). The information in the HIO Update should provide an increased awareness of current and emerging health-related issues.

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**NOTE: There will be no Health Information Operations Update distributed 26 November 2004.**

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## HOT TOPICS

### Army-Funded Effort Examines Androgen's Role in Bone Loss

16 November – EurekAlert reported that research on the role of the male sex hormone androgen in bone formation has piqued the interest of the United States military. The U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command, looking to reduce [stress fractures](#) and preserve bone health among its young recruits, is funding a project to better understand the molecular and cellular events by which androgen influences the skeleton. "It turns out that one of the most common injuries sustained in basic training in both men and women is stress fracture in long bones. In this population, there's also anabolic steroid abuse," said the study's lead investigator. She added, "The goal of the Army in funding this grant is to identify factors that promote a healthy skeleton, that influence stress fractures, and to treat and prevent bone-weakening osteoporosis in the aging population." [View Article](#)

### Computer Models to Simulate Hypothetical Outbreak of Avian Flu

15 November – NIH News reported that a group of scientists are developing computer models to the H5N1 strain of the [bird influenza](#) virus. By simulating the outbreak of the avian flu in a hypothetical human community, researchers can test different intervention strategies that may reduce the rate of transmission between people. The objective is to evaluate methods to locally contain the spread of disease. "We can see what would happen if we take certain actions, like vaccinating specific groups, using antiviral medications, restricting travel or implementing other public health measures," said Irene Eckstrand, Ph.D., a program officer at National Institute of General Medical Sciences. The ultimate goal of the project, added Eckstrand, is to identify disease prevention and control strategies that not only contain the virus, but also quickly drop the number of people infected to zero — basically eradicating H5N1 from the human community. [View Article](#)

### Computer Use Linked To Eye Disease

16 November – BBC reported that heavy computer use could be linked to [glaucoma](#), especially among those who are short-sighted. Glaucoma is caused by increased fluid pressure within the eye compressing the nerves at the back, which can lead to blindness if not treated. Researchers tested the sight of workers in four different Japanese companies, employing over 5,000 people each. Workers who were classified as heavy computer users were more likely to be long-sighted (hypermetropia) or short-sighted (myopia). Around a third (165) of these workers had suspected glaucoma. Upon further analysis, heavy computer use, suspected glaucoma and short-sightedness appeared to be interlinked. The authors do not know why this might be, but believe it could be that short-sighted people are more susceptible to computer use-related eye strain. [View Article](#)

## How Exercise Protects the Heart

14 November – BBC News reported that scientists believe they have shown why regular exercise makes for a healthy heart. It encourages new blood vessels to grow to supply muscle fibers and ultimately switches the muscles into aerobic metabolism. Unlike anaerobic metabolism that uses sugar for energy, aerobic metabolism breaks down fat for energy. When mice exercised on a running wheel, it stimulated the production of a protein called vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF). VEGF encourages the growth of new blood vessels or angiogenesis. Muscle in mammals is generally made up of two fiber types - slow-twitch fibers that need oxygen to work (aerobic) and fast-twitch fibers that can work without oxygen (anaerobic) by breaking down sugar. Lead researcher Dr. Richard Waters said: "What we have shown is that increases in the capillary density occur before a significant change from fast-twitch to slow-twitch fiber type, and furthermore, that the changes in levels of VEGF occur before the increased capillary density." [View Article](#)

## Preparing for Flu Emergency

14 November – Newsday reported that a hardy vaccine capable of thwarting a pandemic strain of [flu](#) can be produced, but not within the next few months. Last week, the World Health Organization held an unprecedented meeting of vaccine manufacturers and public health experts in Geneva to begin preparing for a potential flu emergency. Experts estimate 30 percent of the planet's population could be stricken by pandemic flu, but vaccine makers are in industrialized nations where only 10 percent to 12 percent of the world's population resides. Distribution of a vaccine is one issue concerning experts - but getting the vaccine produced is another. Dr. Klaus Stohr, influenza chief of the United Nations' health agency, and a leader in efforts to develop a pandemic-strain vaccine, said the capability exists to produce an appropriate vaccine. However, money, the lack of a candidate vaccine and clinical testing have yet to occur. At the meeting's start only the United States had begun research on pandemic vaccine production. During the meeting, Japanese and Canadian health officials indicated their companies would conduct similar studies. [View Article](#)

## Smoking and Salt Bad for Stomach Reflux

12 November - Reuters reported that people who smoke or use high amounts of table salt on their food appear to be at increased risk for [gastroesophageal reflux](#), a disease in which stomach juices flow back into the esophagus. In contrast, tea and alcohol, which have been identified as culprits in past studies, did not increase the risk. The risk of gastroesophageal reflux increased as the number of years smoking rose. Compared with non-smokers, people who smoked for 1 to 5 years were 20 percent more likely to develop reflux, while people who smoked for longer than 20 years were 70 percent more likely. As noted, high salt intake also increased the risk of reflux. People who always put extra salt on regular meals were 70 percent more likely to develop reflux than people who never used extra salt. Also, eating meals of salted fish or meat more than twice a month increased the risk by 50 percent compared with never eating such meals. [View Article](#)

## Study: Low-Fat vs. Low-Carb

16 November – CNN reported that regardless of how they shed pounds in the first place, big losers stayed that way by limiting fat rather than carbohydrates. Dieters already have been turning away from Atkins-style plans as a long-term weight-control strategy, and the new study gives them more reason: Low-fat plans seem to work better at keeping weight off. "People who started eating more fat ... regained the most weight over time," said Suzanne Phelan, a Brown Medical School psychologist. [View Article](#)

## Taste Buds Affect Drinking

15 November – CBS News reported that people with super-sensitive taste buds may be less likely to overindulge in [alcohol](#). Researchers found the extent to which people can detect bitter tastes in food and drinks appears to influence how much alcohol they drink. The study showed so-called "supertasters" who were most sensitive to bitterness drank less, on average, than "nontasters" who couldn't detect bitter tastes. The findings indicate that genetic variations in people's taste buds may affect the sensations people get from drinking alcoholic beverages. Researchers say these variations, in combination with other environmental factors may determine the risk of drinking too much alcohol. [View Article](#)

## Ultrasound May Help Dissolve Deadly Blood Clots

17 November – Reuters reported that just like a spoon is used to stir sugar into a cup of tea, high-frequency sound waves may help doctors get rid of deadly blood clots in the brain. Researchers reported they were able to increase the efficiency of Genentech Inc.'s clot dissolver t-PA by 63 percent by bathing the area in front of the clot with ultrasound while the drug went to work. In addition, the technique seemed to reduce the likelihood of brain bleeding, a well-known risk of t-PA therapy. Although t-PA is very effective at dissolving clots, it doesn't work well if blood isn't flowing. Ultrasound helps by creating turbulence in blood trapped in front of the clot -- similar to the way a person might use a spoon to add sugar to a cup of tea. If proven effective in further tests, the technique could be used by most hospitals, which already have ultrasound machines comparable to the ones used in this study, he said. [View Article](#)

## Too Much Belly Fat May Increase Later Disability Risk

17 November - Reuters reported that too much abdominal fat in middle age may increase the risk of disability in later years. "[Obesity](#) increases the risk of disability," study author Dr. Denise Houston, of Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center in North Carolina said. Yet, she added, "it's not just being obese, but where the fat is located that is important." Houston and her colleagues measured the waist-to-hip ratio and body mass index of more than 9,000 African American and white men and women age 45 to 64 years old. At follow-up, about nine years later, the study participants were asked whether they were able to cook, dress themselves, do household chores and perform other daily living activities without difficulty. Overall, disability risk increased along with increasing abdominal fat; and this was often true even among normal-weight study participants. The greatest risk of disability was found among those in both the highest body mass index and the highest abdominal fat categories. These people were 160 percent more likely to report having problems with activities of daily living, than their normal-weight peers in the lowest abdominal fat category. [View Article](#)

## Focus on Epidemiology

### Prevalence of Current Cigarette Smoking among Adults - U.S., 2003

12 November – MMWR reported that cigarette [smoking](#) causes approximately 440,000 deaths annually in the United States. This report indicated substantial variation in cigarette smoking prevalence in the 50 states, the District of Columbia (DC), Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) (range: 10.0%--34.0%). Respondents were asked, "Have you smoked at least 100 cigarettes in your entire life?" and "Do you now smoke cigarettes every day, some days, or not at all?" Current smokers were defined as those who reported having smoked  $\geq 100$  cigarettes during their lifetimes and who currently smoke every day or some days. In 2003, the median prevalence of current

cigarette smoking among adults was 22.1% in the 50 states and DC (range: 12.0% [Utah]--30.8% [Kentucky]) ([Table](#)). Smoking prevalence was higher among men (median: 24.8%; range: 14.0%--33.8%) than women (median: 20.3%; range: 9.9%--28.1%) in the 50 states and DC. In areas other than the 50 states and DC, the median prevalence of current cigarette smoking among adults was 13.6% (range: 10.0% [USVI]--34.0% [Guam]). [View Report](#)

## DoD-GEIS: GEIS at NMRC

18 November - The GEIS Program at the [Naval Medical Research Center Detachment](#) (NMRC) in Lima, Peru completed fiscal year 2004 in strong fashion, contributing to the missions of infectious diseases surveillance, outbreak response, capacity building, and training. The projects supported by GEIS funds were recognized by earning peer-reviewed competitive presentations at the premier tropical medicine meeting in the world, the [American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene Meeting](#) (Miami, 7-11 November 2004). Eleven abstracts were presented in poster format, and eleven in professional presentations. Many Peruvian collaborators presented this data, increasing their scientific experience on an international stage, and enhancing military investigators' role as mentors. The GEIS team responded to four outbreaks of infectious disease in Peru and Bolivia, identifying leptospirosis, hantavirus, and a novel arenavirus as the causative agents of these outbreaks, and partnering well with the regional and national public health authorities. GEIS supported projects additionally provided countless hours of technical laboratory and epidemiological training to our collaborators in Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia. The NMRC GEIS team conducted 7 outbreak investigation courses in four countries, directly addressing the training mission of GEIS. These training courses educated over 200 public health officials in the methods of outbreak detection and management. The GEIS program has been accredited as an associate member of the Training Programs in Epidemiology and Public Health Intervention Network (TEPHINET), a non-profit organization dedicated to international epidemiologic capacity strengthening. Finally, the GEIS program is integrating with the other departments of NMRC to provide seamless investigation into the emerging and re-emerging diseases of South America. *Submitted by LCDR David L. Blazes, MC, USNR, GEIS Coordinator - NMRC. Information on many "hot topics" such as Influenza (avian and human), Leishmaniasis and severe respiratory syndromes, including SARS, is available on the [DoD-GEIS website](#).*

### **Other timely information can be found in:**

The current issue of the Army Medical Surveillance Activity's [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)  
This week's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

## USCENTCOM

### Pink Locusts from North Africa Swarm through Cairo

17 November – Reuters reported that swarms of pink locusts swept through the Egyptian capital on Wednesday. The swarms of millions flew high above tall towers or swooped down onto tree-lined streets, where scared pedestrians stamped on them or ran for cover. The flying insects arrived from neighboring Libya after devouring the countryside in central and western Africa in past months. But locust experts said they were unlikely to wreak similar havoc in Egypt, where agriculture is a cornerstone of the economy. "They are driven by strong winds ... Under current climatic conditions they will not likely cause damage," said Christian Panthenius, a locust expert with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). Panthenius said the locusts would not feed voraciously when the temperature was under 30 degrees Celsius and forecasts put Cairo's temperature for the coming days at below 25 degrees Celsius. [View Article](#)



# USEUCOM

## Chiron Wants Bird Flu Vaccine Facility Assessed

16 November – The Star-Ledger reported that Chiron Corp. has asked British regulators to inspect its facility producing an experimental [bird flu](#) vaccine to make sure it doesn't run into the same contamination problems that forced the closing of another plant and a flu shot crisis in the US. The inspection of its second Liverpool facility, where 10,000 doses of bird flu vaccine are being produced for use in clinical trials, is expected to occur before Christmas. Chiron is one of two companies producing experimental bird flu vaccine. Aventis Pasteur also has received a federal contract to produce 8,000 pilot lots. Aventis also scored a government contract to produce 2 million doses of vaccine to treat the strain of bird flu blamed for killing 32 of the 44 humans infected in Thailand and Vietnam this year. [View Article](#)

## Cholera Outbreak in Nigeria Kills 42

17 November – Reuters reported that a major outbreak of [cholera](#) in northern Nigeria has killed 42 people and hospitalized hundreds in the last two weeks. Gravely dehydrated people lined the floors of the Infectious Diseases Hospital in Kano as the government told doctors to treat the victims free of charge. "We have had 629 cases so far in the last two weeks of which 42 are confirmed dead," said Ashiru Rajab, the hospital's chief medical officer. More than 1,600 Africans have been killed this year by cholera, an intestinal infection spread by contaminated food and water, the World Health Organisation said earlier this month. [View Article](#)

## Reactor Shutdown Sparks Panic

13 November – ProMED reported that a minor incident at the Balakovskaya nuclear power plant created widespread panic in Saratov and nearby regions, with people clearing iodine off drugstore shelves and several being rushed to the hospital with symptoms of [iodine poisoning](#). Reactor No. 2 at the Balakovskaya nuclear power plant, some 900 km southeast of Moscow, shut down on 11 Nov after a pipe burst, but, there was no [radiation](#) leak, the Federal Nuclear Power Agency said. Some local residents said they saw a white cloud above the plant and did not believe the authorities' assurances, suspecting a cover-up like the one that followed the 1986 explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. The nuclear power plant's reactor was restarted early on 13 Nov and was running normally, Interfax reported. [View Article](#)

## Uganda: Cholera Cases Reach 56 in IDP Camp

15 November – IRIN reported that the number of [cholera](#) cases reported among residents of Pabbo displaced person's (IDP) camp in the northern Ugandan district of Gulu reached 56, including three deaths in October. The first case of the epidemic was a man who fell sick and was admitted in Pabbo health center with pneumonia. He was about to be discharged after improvement but developed profuse diarrhea and vomiting, and later died. The other two deaths occurred outside the health-care settings. Pabbo IDP camp is the largest in the region with a population of over 67,000 people. Water chlorination began after tests found that all water pots in households, two out of 14 boreholes and all six springs were contaminated. Oral rehydration therapy sites were established in the camp to handle mild cases of diarrhea and two large tents were set up to handle more cases, should the need arise. Cholera-control measures were, however, being hampered by recent heavy rains that had worsened sanitary conditions. [View Article](#)

# USNORTHCOM

## CDC Reports Milder West Nile Season

14 November – HealthDayNews reported that The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that the U.S. is experiencing a relatively mild season for [West Nile virus](#) after two record-breaking years. The mosquito-borne virus has killed 77 people and sickened 2,282 thus far this year. At this time last year, there were 8,219 illnesses and 182 deaths. Overall in 2003, the virus infected 9,858 people, killing 284. There were 4,156 cases and 284 deaths in 2002. While the virus has spared the Northeast this year, it became more active in two Western states that saw little activity in the past. California reported 737 cases and 20 deaths, and Arizona had 381 cases and 10 deaths. Dr. Ned Hayes, a CDC West Nile expert, said that it's unknown why the numbers declined. Temperature, rainfall and prevention could be factors, Hayes said. "The use of preventive measures by people in terms of insect repellent, also the community approaches to reduce the abundance of mosquitoes makes a difference, too," he told the AP. "We are still learning about the epidemiology and ecology of West Nile transmission." [View Article](#)

## EPA, Airlines Announce Pact on Drinking-Water Safety

11 November - CIDRAP News reported that the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and major US airlines announced an interim agreement this week to strengthen procedures for testing and disinfecting [drinking water on airliners](#). The agreement follows EPA's report in September that water aboard 12.6% of 158 airliners tested by the EPA failed to meet agency standards. Water from 20 planes failed the standard for total coliform bacteria, and two of those had Escherichia coli in their water. The agreement calls for sampling the drinking water on all aircraft over the next year and reporting results to EPA, disinfecting aircraft drinking-water systems quarterly and drinking-water carts once a month, and if a water sample fails to meet standards, the airline will immediately disinfect the drinking-water system or stop serving water until it can be disinfected. [View Article](#) [View News Release](#)

## Tide of New Nurses Rises but Shortages Still Loom Large

17 November – EurekAlert reported that the number of registered nurses entering the job market appears to be on a steady incline but experts say it's still not enough to prevent a long-term crisis. Peter Buerhaus, Ph.D., a senior associate dean for Research at the School of Nursing at Vanderbilt said, "In 2003, employment of younger RNs grew by nearly 90,000, reaching the highest level observed for younger R.N.'s since 1987," said Buerhaus. The number of men entering workforce has also been growing at a steady rate over the past two decades, increasing from 5 percent in 1983 to nearly 9 percent or 160,000 in 2003. But Buerhaus said, "The workforce is projected to peak at a size of 2.3 million in 2012 . . . This total pales in comparison to the Health and Resource Service Administration's latest forecast of 2.8 million full-time R.N.'s that will be needed in 2020. Thus a very, very large shortage still looms on the horizon, a shortage so large that it could easily cripple the entire health care system, not just hospitals," he warned. [View Article](#)

## With Flu Season Near, Many Don't Have Paid Sick Days

14 November – The Detroit News reported that the [flu vaccine](#) shortage couldn't come at a worse time. The number of employers providing paid sick leave dropped from 82 percent in 2002 to 76 percent last year, according to the Society for Human Resource Management. In addition, about half the full-time American work force gets no paid sick days, according to the Department of Labor. Part-

time employees and those in lower-wage service and blue-collar jobs are the least likely to have paid sick days. Cost-cutting employers are increasingly moving away from benefit programs that allow employees to accrue sick days. Instead, they are turning to a use-it-or-lose-it approach. The number of employers offering emergency backup child care or child care when employees have sick family members has dropped from 14 percent in 2001 to 9 percent this year, according to SHRM. [View Article](#)

## USPACOM

### Bhopal 'Faces Risk Of Poisoning'

14 November – BBC News reported that thousands of Indians around Bhopal remain at risk of poisoning 20 years after a major disaster in the city. Four thousand people died after an explosion and toxic gas leak at a pesticide factory owned by U.S. company Union Carbide in 1984. Union Carbide India Limited was responsible for cleaning up the site. But thousands of tons of toxic waste are still stored inadequately nearby, poisoning the town's water supply. A sample of drinking water from a well near the site revealed levels of contamination 500 times higher than the maximum limits recommended by the World Health Organization. The local people who drink this water every day are exposing themselves to a substantial chemical hazard associated, over time, with liver and kidney damage. Union Carbide disputes the test results. [View Article](#)

### Bhutan to Be First Country to Ban Tobacco

16 November – HealthDayNews reported that in December, the tiny Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan will become the first country in the world to impose a nationwide ban on the sale of [tobacco](#). Shops, restaurants, hotels, and bars have until 17 December, Bhutan's national holiday, to get rid of all their tobacco stocks, *Agence France-Presse* reported. Along with the nationwide ban, there will be a 100 percent levy on any tobacco products that are brought into Bhutan for personal consumption. People caught selling tobacco after 17 December face a \$225 fine, a large amount of money in the poor, largely agricultural nation. [View Article](#)

### Fears Raised Over Return of SARS

15 November - CNN.com reported that [SARS](#) is expected to emerge in China again this winter, but an epidemic is unlikely because it is better prepared this time round. "We wouldn't be surprised to see the resurgence of a small number of cases," said Julie Hall, who heads the World Health Organization's SARS team in Beijing. "But we would be surprised to see large outbreaks. The system is much stronger than before and the detection systems are much higher than before." China also has a new protocol on SARS, which calls for designated treatment hospitals and a system of alerts and early warnings aimed at stopping a re-emergence in its tracks, but Hall said it could take time before hospital workers take that to heart. "You need to empower junior staff to be able to raise the alarm," she said. Health care workers also have the ambiguous example of military doctor Jiang Yanyong, who became a folk hero after exposing China's cover-up but was then taken into custody and has been living under virtual house arrest since his release. [View Article](#)

### Girl Dies in Respiratory Disease Outbreak at Hong Kong Hospital

12 November – Yahoo! News reported that Hong Kong health chiefs are investigating an outbreak of [respiratory illness](#) at a hospital involving 19 children that left one girl dead. Twelve boys and seven



girls, aged four to 16, developed fever and symptoms of respiratory tract infection in two wards for severely mentally handicapped children at the Caritas Medical Centre. An 11-year-old girl in the ward who had chronic medical problems died of a chest infection on November 9. Tests were being conducted to identify the cause of the infections in the top medical center's wards, which offer long-term residential care for children. Hong Kong is sensitive to all such outbreaks as the former British colony witnesses the world's first death from [SARS](#) in early 2003. [View Article](#)

## Hong Kong Lawmakers Chew Out Hospital over Mystery Outbreak

17 November – Reuters AlertNet reported that Hong Kong's health chiefs and lawmakers rebuked hospital officials for not informing them quickly enough when dozens of children in pediatric wards fell ill with a mysterious [respiratory illness](#). Although most of the children appear to have recovered and their symptoms have been mild, the episode has triggered dark memories of the [SARS](#) epidemic and fears that Hong Kong's healthcare system may not be able to cope with another outbreak heading into the peak flu season. Lawmakers grilled health officials and managers of the Caritas Medical Centre at a special legislative session, saying they had not learned the lessons from the SARS outbreak, which killed nearly 300 people in the territory in a few months. Thirty-one children at the hospital have come down with high fever and respiratory tract infection in the past two weeks, but they were not reported to the government until late last week. Doctors have ruled out SARS and [influenza](#) and are carrying out more tests to find the cause of the infections. They say the illness appears to be mild and that it is more likely to be caused by a virus, not bacteria. [View Article](#)

## India: Cholera Outbreak in Chennai; 200 Hospitalized

15 November – The Hindu News reported that more than 200 people have been admitted to the hospital at Tondiarpet in North Chennai following an outbreak of [cholera](#). There had been a steady inflow of patients with cholera symptoms, getting admitted to the hospital over the last three days. While 100 people were treated as in-patients yesterday, at least 40 people were admitted today with symptoms of diarrhea and vomiting. At least 50 children had been discharged over the last two days. Attributing the spurt in cholera cases to contamination because of recent rains and low chlorine content in water, the Corporation and Health authorities have taken enough precautionary measures to control the spread of the disease. [View Article](#)

## Philippines: Health Official Says No Dengue Outbreak Here

15 November – The Freeman reported that records from the Department of Health Regional Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit show at least 1,355 [dengue](#) cases in Metro Cebu alone from January until present. Of the 1,355 cases, 20 died, comprising about 1.5 percent of the total number. Regional epidemiologist Benjamin Zuasula assured that there is no dengue outbreak in the region, "The data that we have is cumulative from January to November that is why the number seems too big but there is no dengue outbreak in the region so far." [View Article](#)

## Situation on Bird Flu Pandemic Improves in Thailand

11 November – ProMED reported that the situation on the [avian influenza](#) pandemic in Thailand has improved in terms of the spread of the disease and the number of patients. Dr. Charal Trinvuthipong, director of the government's command center on bird flu, found that the situation had improved since state agencies concerned were instructed to take strict measures to curb the bird flu outbreak. The Public Health Ministry had increased inspection activities in surveillance areas by a factor of 6 since 10 Oct 2004, and had not found any victim of the disease. Dr. Charal disclosed that the number of poultry found infected with the bird flu had appeared to decline. Last week, the disease was found

spread in 91 spots. One more spot was found 9 Nov in the country's central province of Chai Nat, where the bird flu had previously broken out. No birds dwelling naturally had been reported ill or died unusually in recent weeks. [View Article](#)

## USSOUTHCOM

### Microbe Affects 100 Ecuadorians on the Frontier

17 November – ProMED reported that an unknown microbe has caused pus-filled blisters all over the bodies of more than 100 inhabitants of the community of Chilma Bajo, in the province of Carchi, on the Colombian frontier. The provincial health directorate says the epidemic is caused by lice, and will spread unless treated appropriately. Epidemiologist Jose Castillo says that a health brigade will deal with the epidemic. This is the second time an unknown microbe has attacked the zone since an epidemic of diarrhea and vomiting affected El Chical, 30 km from Chilma Bajo, in May. [View Article](#)

Please contact us to comment on or suggest improvements to this report.

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